



US Army Corps  
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Albuquerque District

# RipRap

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## Albuquerque District, key to hurricane recovery

by Bruce R. Hill, Jr., USACE Public Affairs

Like a climactic chapter of an unfinished novel authored by Mother Nature herself, Hurricane Katrina was so unbelievable words couldn't even describe it.

The most devastating and costly hurricane of the four major hurricanes that made landfall in 2005, Katrina became a weather phenomenon never to forget, and one we hope to never see again.

"As devastating as Katrina was, we knew it would only be a matter of time (to deploy)," said Russ Jaramillo, USACE Civil Engineer and Emergency Manager, Albuquerque District. "We were ready to get to the devastated areas as soon as possible. We were all anxious to respond."

Matt Bourgeois, USACE emergency management chief, Albuquerque District, was called up to USACE headquarters and left August 25<sup>th</sup>, the same time Hurricane Katrina began clipping the Northeast Miami-Dade County area as a category one storm. Once a hurricane, Katrina would eventually make landfall again four days later with winds topping 140 miles per hour.

"Once Katrina hit gulf waters, it became a category five hurricane," said Bourgeois. "I was very concerned and called all my family

members to make certain they were all vacating New Orleans."

Bourgeois, a resident of New Mexico, grew up in New Orleans and began his Corps career in the New Orleans District. Assisting in the planning and preparation of the eventual landfall by Hurricane Katrina, Bourgeois spent the majority of his time at the National Resource Coordination Center (NRCC), FEMA's disaster response headquarters for the country, prepositioning Corps employees, water and ice.

"Hurricane Katrina was the fourth hurricane I responded to in 2005," said Bourgeois. "In fact, as I was pre-boarding a plane to go home after being released from assignment for Hurricane Dennis, I received a call on my cell phone from USACE headquarters to return to NRCC in response to Hurricane Emily, which was threatening a large part of Texas at the time."

Led by FEMA, the Corps is a major part of the relief pipeline. Albuquerque District's Ice Team  
(See Katrina, next page)



Photo by Bruce Hill, Jr., USACE

**Matt Bourgeois and Russ Jaramillo, from the Corps emergency management office, review a list of deployed personnel supporting the Hurricane Katrina relief effort in March.**

## **Katrina...** *continued from cover*

responded to Hurricane Dennis in July so we were uncertain as to when or even if we would deploy in support of Hurricane Katrina, said Jaramillo. Prior to Katrina hitting, we knew we were going to be very busy, we just didn't know where or how soon.

According to the Weather Channel, the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season

shattered many long-standing records, including a record number of twenty-seven named storms, obliterating the previous record of twenty-one in 1933. There were 15 actual hurricanes to defeat the old record of 12 set in 1969. Another record set was for the most category-five hurricanes, three with Katrina, Rita and Wilma. 🏠